

Natural Resources Interim Committee

Treasure Valley Aquifer Working Group

Majority Caucus Room, Capitol - Boise, Idaho

May 28, 2004 - 9:30 am

Committee Members in attendance:

Representative Mike Moyle, Chairman
Senator Brad Little
Representative Lawrence Denney
Representative Darrell Bolz

Committee Members absent:

Senator John Andreason

Others in attendance:

Van Brewer, Terry Scanlan, John Chapman, Nancy Merrill, Dan Brown, Brenda Tominaga, John Eaton, Dennis Tanikuni, Christian Petrich, Chuck Mickelson, Gary Smith, Barry Burnell, Matt Howard, Jenna Borovansky, Allyn Meuleman, Zena Cook, Mary McGown, Maria Minicucci, Norm Semanko and Daren Coon.

Chairman Moyle opened the meeting with some general comments from the last meeting of the full committee. He mentioned that John Keyes indicated that the water behind the dams is federal water; Idaho Power is willing to work with us, but it has no water to work with us on; the Milner project refurbishment may be too costly for benefits received; the committee co-chairs will be meeting with the spring users; and that it will take money to do anything.

The focus of this meeting is on urban issues.

Nancy Merrill, Mayor of Eagle, began the meeting with a discussion on issues facing cities. She indicated that she had been on a conference telephone call with the cities of Nampa, Meridian, Boise, and the Association of Idaho Cities to gather information for today's discussion. She mentioned the lawsuit in Pocatello dealing with several irrigators versus the city over a well for the city - dealing with year-round supply versus partial-year pumping. She touched on the topics of: surface water on development and its effect on recharge of the aquifer; cluster development and open spaces; pressurized irrigation and how the water needs to stay with the land; and future municipalities and their water rights.

During the question and answer time she indicated that water is a part of the health and safety requirement of cities and mentioned the use of potable water for recharge. She also stated that long-range planning with water, transportation, and air quality are all involved. It was indicated that is not possible for the small cities (population 400 to 13,000) to do long-range planning due to costs. They will have to get additional water when needed. Quantity and quality are both issues when dealing with water.

Daren Coon, Nampa-Meridian Irrigation District, then presented information from an irrigation district prospective. In their district, they average 1.28 acres per assessment member. In 3,500 acres, 10,000 members have pressurized irrigation system. In the 1960-70s, urbanization was a detriment to the district. This was turned around in the 1990s. There is legislation that allows for the district to enter into contracts with developers to set up pressurized irrigation systems. A local improvement district can be utilized by the district. It requires a 60% vote to approve. In some cases they have used a 75% threshold. Eight have been used in the last 6 years. They have contracts with the City of Nampa and the Ada County Highway District. The opportunities exist in current statutes.

During the question and answer time, the following was brought out: Nampa currently only allows what the water right allows to be distributed to the users. Bureau of Reclamation's use of water for municipal yard use falls in their definition. The concern is the loss of opportunity to allocate non-allocated water in the reservoir. It was felt that the allocations in Lucky Peak should be made permanent. The current statutes are adequate and there is no need for additional help. Urban pressurized systems costs: \$300 to \$600 per lot, with some being as high as \$1200 to \$1600 per lot. Cost per year per acre is \$40 to \$50 and going as high as \$60 to \$90. Boise is up to \$200 per acre.

Christian Petrich then spoke on issues related to implications of urbanization on water use. He indicated that agriculture irrigation is based on consumptive use. Recharge is affected by land use changes. Urban use basically uses municipality water supply which is from the deep aquifer, but the recharge is to the shallow aquifer. The shallow system is not sensitive to small changes (10%). Urbanization requires the use of municipal water, which is mostly from ground water sources. The irrigation season in urban settings is different from agricultural. The use of surface water may encourage more irrigation. In dry years, there could be more demand on the municipal water source. With increased population, there is a move to more pressurized irrigation systems. Currently IDWR has over 450 requests for well applications. The challenge is to seek ways to meet the challenging needs within the context of the current delivery system.

The question and answer time revealed the following information: Urban water use requires both the use of surface and aquifer water. Boise transfers water rights from downstream to upstream uses. Christian indicated that he would like to see a 40 or 80 acre field used to quantify water application, sources of water, and where the water goes.

Dr. Mary McGowan, IDWR, then presented information on the Lower Boise River Basin Plan. The Draft Comprehensive Boise Plan indicates 1,290 square miles in the basin which includes 1/3 of the state's population. Currently the basin has 410,000 people, but that number is estimated to be 1.2 million by 2050. The basin includes 5 irrigation districts. By 2050 there will be a reduction of 35,000 acres of agricultural land, thereby releasing 200,000 acre feet of water. There will at the same time, however, be an increase of 50,000 acres potential increase (urban) requiring a demand of 225,000 acre feet of water. DCMI (non-agricultural) - there are thousands of domestic wells in which no one knows the location of or amount of water they are using. How we meet the future demands of the water we have is through conservation, price of water, and by possibly changing the Bureau of Reclamation's authorization of water rights.

Studies and projects: Water use and management

TVHP, Conjunctive administration, METRIC (Measuring Evapo-transpiration with high Resolution & Internal Calibration), Boise Valley Water Use

Question and answer time: Discussion on the Bureau of Reclamation's authorization of water rights; use of water just because we have it; loss of land and increase in water use; 1 ½ % of farmland is lost each year; a challenge might be to use surface water for other needs such as fire, etc.

The next main committee meeting is on June 3rd.

Any suggestions for our next meeting topic should go to Representative Moyle.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Darrell Bolz
Acting Secretary